

Vows

by kwipinky

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Summary: Herodotus brings Gabrielle home to stay, Xena considers leaving her there.

Vows

> <meta name="ProgId"> The sun paled when it dawned and Herodotus found his eldest daughter's bed empty

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I hope you enjoy it. Please let me know what you think.
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Sex: Nope

_Violence: Just like any episode. Still PG 13 anyway. _

Spoilers: None

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The sun paled when it dawned and Herodotus found his eldest daughter's bed empty. He knew her destination. Why? How could she just up and leave like that. He'd made arrangements for her life. They weren't bad plans, Perdicus did love her and he was a gentle soul. _With a strong back._ Herodotus shook his head. Enough of that. He'll get her back, someday. He vowed on all that he believed: he'll take Gabrielle home.

Nearly two seasons later.

Xena applied cool compresses to the hot forehead; they seemed to be helping. Or, was that wishful thinking? Gabrielle shivered in the warmth of the room. The three-day journey had taken its toll. Blood still seeped from the wound and the swelling appeared to be going down, yet she still slept, and Xena didn't know why; she couldn't face losing her again. Xena shook her head trying to ward off unpleasant thoughts and images. Fear shrouded her heart. Her vigil demanded all her reserves, and she'd been injured too. But she could not tear herself away. Awakened abruptly, Xena was amazed she'd fallen asleep.

Cyrene opened the door and stepped in. Xena gave her a little smile. Her mother's expression erased it. Xena stood up still holding Gabrielle's hand. The magistrate, Herodotus and Hecuba, Gabrielle's parents, and another man Xena did not know, followed Cyrene. She went to Xena's side and put her arm around Xena's waist. Xena searched her mother's eyes, and her evident anguish pushed Xena's fear into a white-hot spectre, which invaded her being and weakened her legs.

The unknown man went to Gabrielle's side and began examining her. Xena watched his movements and started to stop him. Cyrene pulled on her arm.

"What is this about?" Xena asked in a strangled voice.

"Xena, I don't know how to explain this," Cyrene said to her daughter and then turned to the magistrate. "Perhaps you should explain."

"Yes, well, Xena these people are Herodotus and Hecuba!"

"I know who they are," Xena said through clenched teeth. She squeezed Gabrielle's hand tighter.

"Okay, that'll make things easier. They're here to take Gabrielle home to Poteidaia," The magistrate pointed to the man examining Gabrielle, "This is the healer from Poteidaia, Theos." The healer nodded. The magistrate motioned to Herodotus. "He has papers filed with the magistrates in Poteidaia and Amphipolis, and they _are_ binding. How is she Theos?"

"She is stable, your healer is gifted," Theos said to Xena, and then to the magistrate, "I think if we take it slow, she should be okay. I'm traveling with her at Herodotus request."

"We're taking Gabrielle home," Herodotus said with a slight tremble.

"She shouldn't be moved!" Xena stammered. Looking down on Gabrielle her heart raced and she felt fear attacked her soul. "It's not in her best interest!"

"Like you know what's best for her!" Herodotus yelled. "She slipped her out of her home. A mere child, leaving her home behind to join up with a warlord. That wasn't in her best interest, but that didn't stop you. Did it?"

"I tried to send her home," Xena answered, feeling like a scolded child.

"You think only of yourself! You took her once! By the gods, you'll not do it again!" Herodotus yelled.

Stung, Xena wanted to sting back. Cyrene stepped in front of her daughter. The magistrate pulled the parchment from his vest. He started to read:

"Hear this, Gabrielle of Poteidaia, minor child of Herodotus and Hecuba of Poteidaia, you are hereby under arrest for the crime of running away from home. She is to be remanded to the custody of her parents until a date is set in front of the magistrate of Poteidaia, to answer for your charges. Any interference by Xena of Amphipolis will warrant a charge of kidnapping and you shall be arrested and held until the date you would be set in front of the magistrate of Poteidaia. It would be in the best interest of the child for her to return to her home and care of her father," the magistrate pushed the parchment in Xena's direction. She slapped it to the ground.

"I don't believe this!" Xena screamed, still holding Gabrielle's hand she reached for her sword. "I'm not letting you move her! You could kill her!"

"I'll take care of her," Theos said calmly. "But, I understand your concerns. Your healer has done a great job. I need to speak with him."

"Xena's the healer," Cyrene said and pushed Xena's sword back into its scabbard. She hugged Xena. "Daughter, listen to me." She cupped Xena's face with both hands. "This is legal, we have to obey."

"No, mother! This isn't right!" Xena said her voice anguished.

"I didn't say it was right, Xena," Cyrene said as she hugged her rigid daughter's frame. "But, we MUST obey the order, Xena."

"NO!" Xena cried.

"Please, move away from Gabrielle," the magistrate said looking at Xena's fierce blue eyes. "I'm sorry."

Cyrene pulled Xena's body away from Gabrielle. Xena broke free and dropped to her knees in beside Gabrielle. "No!" Xena said sounding like a frightened child. She looked at her mother pleading with her. Cyrene wept and called for Toris. He ran into the room; he saw his mother and Xena. He knew about the order and he had expected Xena to resist. He didn't want to see his sister hurt, and when his mother called he couldn't stay away. Crying and biting his lip, he and Cyrene tore Xena away from Gabrielle.

"NO! Please! Don't take her! PLEASE! Mother! Toris!" Xena pleaded with her very soul. She looked at her mother and then Toris.

"Please!" They gently pulled Xena toward the door. Afraid she might be hurting them, Xena stopped fighting her family, and dropped to her knees, "Please, Herodotus, please!" Her heart breaking, she finally relented. Cyrene and Toris helped her to her feet and she cast a tear-blurred look at Gabrielle, lowered her head, and let herself be

taken from the room

Herodotus turned to Theos, "What did you need to speak to the healer about?"

"Never mind," Theos said. "I think I can figure out what she's been treated with."

Herodotus smiled as he watched the door close behind Xena and her family. A single tear slowly followed the lines of Hecuba's face. She felt a heaviness that she couldn't understand. Herodotus helped the healer and three members of his family load Gabrielle onto their wagon. The healer placed pillows around her and made sure she taken the move well, he motioned to the magistrate that she was okay to travel. Moments later they left Amphipolis.

Xena watched from a window in the tavern. "I'll get you out of there, I promise," she vowed to Gabrielle. She shut the window and then fell across her bed and sobbed like she'd never sobbed before. Her body hiccupped with every breath, and her tear ducts eventually dried out. Somehow, sleep overtook her shaking body. Cyrene wept as she watched her child's despair. She would help her get Gabrielle back. She covered Xena's slightly trembling body and left the room. Her heart saddened and angered at the man who took joy at hurting her daughter. He'll pay, Cyrene vowed, someday.

A portly fellow tapped on the door as he walked into the tavern. Annoyed Cyrene went to face him. He kept looking nervously around her.

"Were not open yet," Cyrene said in a slightly bitter voice.

He just looked at her.

"Are you deaf?" she asked, getting angry.

He laughed, "No, I'm Salmoneus. A friend of Xena. Is she here?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid she isn't seeing visitors, she's not feeling well," Cyrene said softly.

"She'll see me," he said to Cyrene. "I'm sure."

"What is it mother?" Xena said as she walked to the door.

"XENA!" Salmoneus said as he pushed by Xena's angry mother. Cyrene grabbed his collar and yanked him backwards. "Wow, I see where you get your strength now!" He said as he fell on his butt.

Xena helped him to his feet. "What do you want?"

"Me? Want?" Salmoneus laughed a quick easy laugh. "You know me so well. But, it's not that. I'm here because I heard the good news."

Xena grabbed him and thrust him against the wall. "You think that losing Gabrielle is good news?"

"Huh? No! Losing Gabrielle?" he said, and then noticed Xena's gaunt face and ragged breath. She was clearly not well. He wondered how he could save his hide. "No, that's not what I meant. I'm talking about the academy wanting to buy her scroll," he said, hoping that she would let him go. Which she did.

"The academy?" Cyrene asked.

"It's in Athens, a school for bards. A very prestigious school. Tell me more, Salmoneus." Xena said in a very calm voice.

"Where is Gabrielle, what did you mean about losing her?" Salmoneus asked, clearly upset.

"Her father came and took her to Poteidaia," Xena said with a tired voice, her words slow. "What about the scroll?"

"I can't believe you haven't heard before now. The announcement went out two weeks ago," he said. "Wait a minute. The announcement would've went to Poteidaiaâ€|"

Xena sat down. "Right, and then guess who shows up here demanding Gabrielle home? In the shape she was in she couldn't resist. But, how'd they know she was here? and sick too?"

Cyrene cleared her throat, "I guess that would be my fault. I thought they should be here with her being so sickâ€| I'm sorry, Xena, I never thought they'd take her like that."

"It's not your fault mother, you were just thinking as a parent. But that explains a lot. How much money are they offering her, Salmoneus?" Xena asked deep in thought.

"I don't know, that is a private affairâ€|." He said, smiling evilly.

"Salmoneus, you know I can pinch, don't you?" Xena said with a half serious tone.

"Two hundred dinars. And, they want to offer their support, which means they'll provide her with writing classes, parchment, quills, and all the ink she could use in her lifetime. Many bards have sought the Athens Academy grant. It's quite esteemed," he said in an animated voice, clearly excited by knowing such important information. "The funny thing about it is that the bard had to be nominated by a member of the Academy. Was that you Xena?"

"No, it wasn't me," Xena said brow furrowed.

"Who then? Could that have something to do with why Gabrielle isn't here?" Salmoneus asked watching Xena ponder over what she'd just heard.

Xena got up and walked to the door of the tavern. She peered into the courtyard. "Yeah, I think it does, and I'm gonna find out why. Mother, I'm going to Poteidâ€|."

Cyrene pressed a bag into Xena's hand before she finished. Xena smiled and hugged her. "Xena, you could get arrested if you go in

there ready for battle," Cyrene sensed that she was wasting her voice. "Try to be nice, okay?"

"Mother, nice is my first name," Xena smiled sweetly.

"Right before pulverizer," Salmoneus said to himself.

"Let's go Salmoneus," Xena grabbed his collar and pulled him after her. She didn't listen to his opinion of the idea. She needed his help.

Xena went to the tailor's shop and bought new tunic for herself, and a new business type suit for Salmoneus. She then went to the village smithy and borrowed a wagon. They would need it to transport Gabrielle. Xena shook inside, she knew that Gabrielle was still alive because her soul still felt her. Xena went to check on Argo. Salmoneus waited on the wagon.

"Hey girl, I just stopped in to tell you I'm going to get our girl back," Argo whickered and pawed the stall floor. "You miss her too. I know. I'm gonna let you stay here because I have to have a wagon to get Gabrielle back here. I don't think you like pulling wagons, do you?" Argo neighed. "Didn't think so. So I'll get on the way now, and I'll check on you when I get back, in a couple days." Xena rubbed Argo's muzzle. "Wish me luck girl," Argo nodded her head. Xena left. Argo waited a moment and then reached over and unlatched the stall door. She took a bite of horse feed and then followed her mistress.

"Gabrielle?" Hecuba called her daughter's name as she washed her fevered face. "Gabrielle, honey its momma. Can you hear me?" She had been in Poteidaia for a day when Gabrielle started to wake up. The healer said Gabrielle would have to decide upon returning to the living. She mumbled now and then. Not fully awake, but much better than a day ago. Hecuba renewed her cool compress and wrung it out. She put it on her daughter's head and noticed Gabrielle's eyes were open.

"Daughter?"

"Xena?" Gabrielle whispered.

"No, its mother," Hecuba wept; her daughter came back.

"Where's Xena?" Gabrielle looked around the room, and saddened immediately because Xena wasn't there.

"How is she?" Herodotus asked.

"Awake," Hecuba answered.

"Gabrielle?" He knelt beside his eldest child.

"Father?" she asked confused, and reached out her hand to him; after a few moments Hecuba took it.

"Yes, I'm here," Herodotus said with a touch of relief in his voice.

"Where's Xena?" Gabrielle searched her father's face.

"Dead," he said. Cold and blunt. "And, she was gonna let you die too."

"What?" Gabrielle cried and tried to sit up. "When? Where?"

"Who cares, you're home where you belong. You'd best put that she-demon out of your mind. Someone is here to see you. Perdicus!" Herodotus yelled curtly. "C'mere boy. Your betrothed is awake."

A young man entered the healer's yurt. He bent to get through the door. He was at least five feet, and eight inches tall and weighed at least one hundred and ninety pounds. His clean-shaven face, chiseled and ruggedly handsome was highlighted by blue-black hair that framed his face. He sat down on the bed beside Gabrielle. "Hey there," he smiled a sad smile.

"Perdi?" Gabrielle reached out to hug him. Perdicus leaned over and gently lifted Gabrielle into his arms. She sobbed pathetically, heart broken with grief for her friend. She could not believe how harshly her father told her of Xena's death. Her body jerked with spasms of crying and retching. Perdicus put a pot under her chin and helped her empty her stomach. After a few moments, she regained her composure.

"How do you feel, Gabby? Really?" Perdicus knew she was not well, but she'd say she was.

"Okay," she said, unconvincingly. She wondered if she'd ever feel again. Half of her soul was gone. She struggled to remember what had happened to her. She spoke to herself more than to anyone else; brows knitted she tried to recall the battle. "Weâ€| had a run in with some bandits. Xenaâ€|" Gabrielle swallowed slowly. "â€|and Iâ€| stopped two bandits trying to kill some travelers. Xena went after four othersâ€| Iâ€| can't seem to rememberâ€|." And, what puzzled her most: why she didn't she feel the emptiness she'd felt when she thought Xena was killed with a poisoned dart? Now they had been attacked and Xena killed. But, Gabrielle couldn't remember. Why?

They'd walked into a robbery, and Xena had been surrounded when Gabrielle last saw her. Tears inched down her face. Xena had to be dead, or she would be with Gabrielle, and yet, her soul feltâ€|intact. What could that mean? "Father, where isâ€|Xena's â€|b-body?"

"Get that bitch off your mind, Gabrielle. You're home now, and that's the best place for you! The only place you should think about!" Herodotus angrily snarled. Gabrielle jumped and her skin twitched in fear. She fought against the pain, but her body began to cry, and she couldn't stop it. Her head began to pound, and even with her family, she felt so alone.

Hecuba pulled at Herodotus' tunic, "Husband, she's ill. Please, be kind."

"Kindness allowed our eldest child to roam the countryside with a murdering bitch! I'll never be that kind again! I'll have her

arrested on sight. She'd better not show up here. That's all I can say," Herodotus said under his breath. To Gabrielle: "Rest, you're getting married when you're able; that is, ahem, when I think you're able." He turned on his heel and left the room.

Hecuba followed him.

Perdicus watched them leave with bemused attention. Deep in thought, he held on to Gabrielle, her body shook, racked with grief, at the painful memories of the ruthless warlord. He gently cradled her into his chest. He wondered what it was that Xena had done to hurt his childhood sweetheart that badly, what had the bitch done that made the memory so horrifying. He would avenge the deed, if he knew what it was; he vowed to find the she-devil, vowed to kill her. Gabrielle, his betrothed, had been wronged and he would avenge that wrong. That was his job, his duty, to his future wife.

Perdicus kept rocking Gabrielle even after she stopped sobbing. He gently touched her long blonde hair. He did love her, but Lila. Lila was something else. His heart leapt at the sound of her voice, and the sight of her constricted his throat. He would have to learn to live with loss. Loss. Gods, would marrying Gabrielle be his loss? Gods! He knew the truth. He was in love with Lila. But, he had to marry Gabrielle. He had NO choice. Saddened, Perdicus laid his sleeping betrothed on the bed, and gently brushed a lock of blonde hair from her eyes. His mouth dry, he rose, feeling intense guilt, he left the room.

Salmoneus was going to Poteidaia. Xena needed to find out where Gabrielle was, and he would draw less attention. He would enter the village as Salamander, the scroll merchant, and Xena provided him with one of Gabrielle's original scrolls.

"Remember Salmoneus, let him do the talking, and don't volunteer any information. Herodotus is smart. Just tell him you are the buyer of the scroll, and you are representing the Athens Academy. You know what the message said, right?" Xena said as she straightened his tunic. "You must get it right."

"Okay already, I know what to say, and do. Now let me go so we can find her," he smiled. "I'm glad I can help you Xena, you've done much for me."

Xena made her way to Gabrielle's home, and she found no one there. She then went to the healer's yurt. She saw many people going in and out. A young man exited the building and leaned up against the wall. Xena could tell he was very upset. Fear sent chills up her spine, and she could wait no more. She had to see Gabrielle, no matter the cost. She waited for the man to leave and she pulled her cloak up around her head and bent over leaning on a cane. She hobbled her way into the healer's hut. She tapped her cane on the door. A kindly old man answered.

"Yes? Are you injured?" he asked.

"Yes," Xena whispered in a very low voice. "You could say that. I'm having trouble with my heart."

"Please come inside," the healer helped Xena enter the hut.

"Thank you," Xena answered as she took in the room. The candles cast a yellow glow on the beds in the hut. There were several other people there. Four beds lined each side of the yurt. Xena looked for Gabrielle. She hobbled down the makeshift aisle, and upon reaching the last bed her eyes danced with joy, and she let out an audible sigh.

Gabrielle was sitting on the side of the bed; she was sipping some hot tea and noticed someone staring at her. She couldn't see her face but she knew. Xena's blue eyes locked onto Gabrielle's green and a waltz of the orbs played like a beautiful melody. Xena embraced Gabrielle and they both sobbed like babies. Xena quickly regained her composure and shushed her friend.

"Oh Xena! Father said you were dead!" Gabrielle hugged her again, to be doubly sure.

"No, I was so worried, I thought I'd lost you!" Xena hugged Gabrielle likewise.

"Excuse me," the healer interrupted. "Do you know Gabrielle?"

"Yes, this is my aunt from Mt. Nestus," Gabrielle lied.

"Oh, how is your heart?" the healer asked Xena.

"Better, now that I've had my medicine," she said and looked at her friend. "Thank you."

"Okay, I wish all my friends with sick hearts could get some of that medicine. Take care, but Gabrielle doesn't need to overdo herself. Her daddy'd kill me," he laughed. "Ole Herodotus' bark is worse thanâ€|well, you know."

He left the two friends together. Xena looked nervously around the yurt. "He's right. You need to stay here until you're better."

"Xena, father says I am marrying Perdicus, and he's very determined," Gabrielle shook her head.

"I think I can take care of that, but first we need to get you well. Okay?" Xena asked. Gabrielle nodded. "I think you'll need at least one more day before you can even think about travel."

"What about you? Why are you disguised?" Gabrielle suddenly noticed Xena's hidden face. "Are you hurt?"

Xena laughed, "No, you father doesn't want me around you, and he's even threatened me with jail."

Gabrielle was incredulous, "what! He can't do that!"

"I think he could, and that's why I'm going to take this slow. I need you to go along with me for a while. Okay?" Xena soothed.

"How? Why could he? Never mind. I know him, and he would," Gabrielle sighed.

"Okay, I'm going to go now. I'll come back in a candlemark. You stay put and rest. Get your strength back; you'll need it when we leave here. Gabrielle, I love you," Xena said and hugged her friend gently.

"I love you, too, don't forget me, okay?" Gabrielle's green eyes started tearing up.

"Impossible," Xena said. Biting her lip, she left quickly.

Gabrielle lie back on her cot and closed her tired eyes. She hoped Xena could get her out of the mess she found herself in. She shook her head; of course Xena would save her, because she always did.

Salmoneus clapped Herodotus on the back, and they parted ways. Xena waited for the slick talker to meet with her in the tavern. He had checked in and she slipped into his room. She was lying on the bed when he came in.

"Xena?" Salmoneus asked quietly. "You awake?"

"Yea, barely," Xena said. Injured souls take a lot from a person and Xena's had taken a beating. She wanted to sleep and she wanted to know what Salmoneus had discovered too. "Do you have a report for me?"

"Yes, my queen," Salmoneus' eyes widened in horror. Where did that come from he thought to himself. I must have a death wish, a subconscious death wish. "I'm sorry Xena, I didn't mean to say something so dumb."

"Salmoneus, you're tired. You're not used to working so hard are you?" Xena chuckled.

"Yes, I am very tired." Thank the gods she's in a good mood, or just to tired to care, either way, thanks!

"Well," Xena asked again. "What does he want?"

"Xena, I think he wants his daughter to be happy. He's a father who's worried about his daughter being out in the world full of blood and gore. He has the same concerns that any parent would have. I think he's a nice guy," Salmoneus waited. Afraid Xena wouldn't like his assessment of Gabrielle's father, Salmoneus waited for her response.

Xena rested her chin on her thumbs. "Do you think he's right?"

"About?"

"Being with me? The life I lead is hard on her," Xena sighed more than said.

Salmoneus' heart went out to her, and he didn't like the idea of

hurting her further. But, he was going to be honest. "Yes, I do." His hearted pounded wildly, and his chest tightened making it harder for him to breathe. "Let me explainâ€¦".

"No, that's okay. I'll catch up with you later," Xena said biting her lip and keeping her face away from Salmoneus' gaze. She abruptly left him alone in the room.

Salmoneus you idiot, you know she's tender. Gods, such a fool! Should I go after her? I know I couldn't find her. Idiot, idiot, IDIOT! Salmoneus thoughts berated him incessantly until he went to the tavern and drank the thoughts away.

Gabrielle, feeling better than she had in quite some time, walked to the window, watched the sunrise, and wondered where Xena was. She didn't come back last night when she'd promised. That wasn't like her to not do something she'd promised. Gabrielle gazed at Poteidaia; the little village was growing quickly. She loved the hometown atmosphere, and knew that she could not stay there. Her father wanted her safe and healthy, but his vision of her perfect life didn't necessarily include happiness. Happiness, Gabrielle wondered, why was it so important?

Should she stay in Poteidaia? No bandits pounced on her at every turn, nor was she being attacked to hurt Xena. She shook her head. No. That wasn't true anymore. Now, when they're pounced on it's usually because of her deeds. Deeds like stopping evil, vicious, bloodthirsty warlords and tyrants who lived to torment. It was a good life she had with Xena; they protected innocents, and she wasn't going to just give it up. No, she vowed, not without a fight. Gabrielle realized her purpose in the world; it wasn't helping Xena, but helping others. She gathered her belongings and headed home. Her father had a few things to learn, and she was a good teacher.

Perdicus decided to speak to Herodotus, he loved Gabrielle, but he was in-love with Lila. He decided to stand up and talk to the hardheaded man. He walked determinedly toward the home of his future father-in-law.

Salmoneus awakened in his room, and he didn't know how he'd got there. His head revolted against any semblance of standing. He made his body go to the washbowl and he splashed water on his face. The water was cool and refreshing. He shook his head to clear his thoughts. He remembered the night before, and his talk with Xena. Gods! His talk with Xena! He turned abruptly and staggered a moment. He needed to find her. He didn't let her tell her that he thought that her life on the road assisting others was hard, but he thought it was just the life Gabrielle wanted. He didn't handle the talk well. Now he would straighten things out, first with a trip to one Herodotus of Poteidaia. He'd tell him how he thought it should be. He strengthened his resolve and headed out the door.

Herodotus had just sat down to breakfast when Gabrielle walked in. She had a fierce determined look, and he expected to have a lively conversation.

"Father! We needâ€¦" A knock at the door cut her off.

"Just a moment daughter," he said to an angry face. He opened the door and Perdicus's frame filled the door space. "Come in."

Perdicus also carried a determined look on his face. Herodotus almost chuckled at the same look he was getting from two different people.

"Herodotus! We needâ€¦" Another knock.

"Sit down you two," he said as he answered the door. He opened the door and Salmoneus stood at the entrance. Herodotus motioned him in. He went in, his face was determined too, but not as fierce as Gabrielle or Perdicus.

Gabrielle and Perdicus started talking at the same time. "My life is mine, father, to live as I see fitâ€¦"

"I love Gabrielle but I'm in-love with Lilaâ€¦"

Gabrielle stopped and looked at Perdicus with a surprised expression. "Really, Perdi?"

He smiled sheepishly, "yeah, really."

Gabrielle hugged him, she was glad for him and her sister. She was amazed at how happy she was. They both ignored Herodotus and he didn't like it.

"Now, wait a minute you two, I'm in charge here," Herodotus said.

"Don't you think they're adult enough to make their own decisions?" Salmoneus said.

Herodotus looked at each of the people standing in front of him. Stopping at Salmoneus he shook his head. "Aren't you from Athens?"

"Well, not really," Salmoneus extended his arm. "Salmoneus' the name."

"Athens?" Gabrielle asked. "What's this about?"

"Daughter, sit, all of you sit, please," Herodotus sat with them at his table. After a moment he began his story. "I have been up all night arguing with your mother. She thinks I'm butting in, and I think I've a say in your life Gabrielle. But, in all fairness, I took advantage of good news. I nominated your scroll to the academy. Yes, I'm a member. I found your scroll about the Dreamworker and when I read it, well it took my breath away."

Herodotus smoothed the cloth covering the table. "I didn't want your

life wasted fighting bad people when you could touch good people with your writing. I wasn't wrong either. They agreed and accepted you. I was afraid you wouldn't want to go, and I wanted you to marry young Perdicus and go to Athens and study. I still don't think I'm wrong, but your mother thinks she is just as right; you've lived on your own for nearly two seasons, and well, I won't stand in your way. You can hate me if you want daughter; I only did it because I love you, and want the best for you."

The silence of the room was eerie, and finally broken with a knock of a different sort on the door. Herodotus went to the door and opened it. Argo stood on the porch and pawed as she nodded her head.

"Argo!" Gabrielle said as she ran to the animal. "Where's Xena?" She looked outside and couldn't find her soulmate.

Salmoneus searched with her and then touched her arm. "Gabrielle, I may have hurt Xena very deeply last night. She left so quick I don't know. I don't know where she went, but I'll help you find her."

"No Salmoneus, Argo will take me to her," Gabrielle said to her sad friend, and then turning to her father, "I'm going to find Xena, and when I do I'm coming back for my things. We'll be leaving together. I don't want to hurt you father, but that's the way it is. Period," She hugged him.

"I think I finally figured that out," Herodotus said as Hecuba joined him. "Are you strong enough?" Gabrielle shot him an angry look. "Go, go find her."

Gabrielle climbed on Argo's bare back and they headed out to find Xena.

Xena sat under a tree sharpening her sword on the wagon's tailgate. Could she go on without Gabrielle? Xena knew she couldn't face her last night. Salmoneus was right, she'd probably be better off at home. But, on the other hand, a voice cried out to Xena, you're not giving her the right to choose whether to travel with you, or not. Shouldn't Gabrielle have that right?

Xena shook her head, she just didn't know. She felt so incredibly tired, too tired to wrestle with such a hard subject. Maybe the fates would choose for her and let her know somehow. She heard a familiar whicker and Argo tramped up to her and snorted in her ear. She jumped and hugged the horse's sinewy neck. "Where'd you come from?"

"Poteidaia," Gabrielle said as she walked around the horse.

"Gabrielle, why are you out of bed? You should be!" Xena argued.

Gabrielle ran to her and hugged Xena. "By the gods Xena, I'm exactly where I should be. With you." Xena hugged her then. But uncertainty ravaged in her mind.

"You sure?" Xena asked in a whisper.

"I give you my solemn vow," Gabrielle said and held Xena until she stopped shaking.

The End

End
file.